United Nations A/65/539

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 October 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fifth session
Agenda item 45
Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

Letter dated 21 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with instructions received from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 11 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Argentina (A/65/504) addressed to you, transmitting in an annex a note of protest dated 9 October 2010 submitted by the Republic of Argentina to the United Kingdom on intent to fire missiles from the Falkland Islands.

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the United Kingdom reply, dated 21 October 2010, submitted by the United Kingdom to the Republic of Argentina (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 45 concerning the question of the Falkland Islands.

(*Signed*) Mark **Lyall Grant**

10-60083 (E) 271010

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Annex to the letter dated 21 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Her Britannic Majesty's Foreign and Commonwealth Office presents its compliments to the Embassy of the Republic of Argentina and has the honour to refer to the note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Republic of Argentina dated 9 October 2010 concerning the live firing of Rapier anti-aircraft missiles.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and over South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas of both Territories.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland can confirm that the test firing of Rapier anti-aircraft (maximum operational range 6,800 metres) missiles in the Falkland Islands has happened approximately every six months for 28 years since they were deployed there in response to the Republic of Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands. The live firing in October 2010 is therefore routine and does not represent any change in the United Kingdom defence posture in the South Atlantic.

The United Kingdom would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the Government of the Republic of Argentina to the note of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship dated 28 October 2008 and the note of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom dated 13 November 2008 concerning the live firing of Rapier anti-aircraft missiles. This exchange confirms that the Republic of Argentina was aware of the live firing of the missiles. Indeed information on Rapier testing has openly been made available by the United Kingdom for many years. The note of the United Kingdom dated 13 November 2008 also points out that the Republic of Argentina undertakes major military exercises of its own without issuing any prior warning to the United Kingdom or Falkland Islands Governments. Some military exercises undertaken by the Republic of Argentina have also included live firing out to sea.

The United Kingdom points out that such misunderstandings could be easily avoided if the Republic of Argentina were to agree to regular military-to-military discussions, communications and confidence-building measures as envisaged under the South Atlantic Working Group, last held in July 1994. The United Kingdom shared a paper with the Republic of Argentina in December 2009 outlining the willingness of the United Kingdom to resume military-to-military discussions under the South Atlantic Working Group. The United Kingdom regrets that the Republic of Argentina has not yet responded to that United Kingdom paper and repeats that it would welcome military-to-military discussions.

Americas Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London

21 October 2010